

Old Steel Bridge  
Spanning the Flathead River  
on FAS 317, (1½ Miles East of)  
Kalispell VICINITY  
Flathead County  
Montana

HAER No. MT-21

HAER  
MONT,  
15 - KALSP.V,  
1 -

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

Old Steel Bridge

MT-21

HAER  
MONT,  
15-KALISPELL,  
1-

**Location:** Spanning the Flathead River on FAS 317, 1-1/2 miles east of Kalispell, Flathead County, Montana.

**Date of Construction:** 1894

**Present Owner:** Flathead County  
Flathead County Courthouse  
Kalispell, Montana 59901

**Present Use:** Vehicular Bridge

**Significance:** Flathead County was created by the third session of the Montana legislature in 1893. Kalispell, which became the county seat, was becoming the important trade center for the northwest corner of the State. The mountain slopes of the county produced large quantities of lumber and the Flathead Valley, with rich soil, low elevation, and mild climate, was producing award-winning fruits and vegetables. A spur of the Great Northern RR served Kalispell. In January of 1894, the county commissioners decided to build a bridge over the Flathead River near the site of the Kalispell Ferry, provided the city of Kalispell would share the costs. In March, Gillette & Herzog of Minneapolis were awarded the contract for \$17,497.00 with the county paying \$9,999.000 and the city paying the remainder. The three main spans of the multi-span bridge are pin-connected Pratt through trusses, the southern-most being 220 feet long, the other two each being 144 feet long. The spans are approached by wood stringer spans at each end and the total length of the bridge is 610 feet. The superstructures of the spans are as follows: lower chords are eyebars; verticals are two laced channel sections; diagonals are eyebars and turnbuckles; the upper chords are continuous steel plates riveted atop two channel sections with lacing bars (220 foot span) or batten plates (144-foot spans) riveted to their lower flanges. Wood stringers sit on the top flange of steel I-beam floor beams which are riveted to the superstructure. The deck and its double driving track are wood planks. The

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main spans are supported by tubular concrete piers encased in riveted steel plate cylinders and the approach spans are supported by wood pile bents. The bridge was the first large steel bridge built in the NW corner of the State.

Transmitted by:

Kevin Murphy, Historian HAER, 1984; from data compiled by Fredric L. Quivik, 1979

ADDENDUM TO  
OLD STEEL BRIDGE  
Spanning the Flathead River  
on FAS 317, 1 1/2 miles east of Kalispell  
Kalispell Vicinity  
Flathead County  
Montana

HAER No. MT-21

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National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 37127  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127